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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [AF](#) [CA](#)
SUBJECT: CANADIAN VIEWS OF U.S. PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW AFGHAN
GOVERNMENT

REF: STATE 118297

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Canada strongly agrees with the U.S. priorities for the new Afghan government, notably the need for greater anti-corruption efforts and for greater security, especially in the south. Canada also calls upon Afghanistan to implement its international human rights commitments, particularly related to women's rights. Canada welcomes continued and enhanced coordination within the international community, particularly as we together consider new benchmarks for Afghanistan and examine the possibilities for one or two international conferences on Afghanistan in the coming months. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) In response to reftel demarche by PolMinCouns to Director General Renetta Siemens of the Afghanistan Task Force in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) on November 17, Director of Policy and Advocacy Adrian Norfolk of the Afghanistan Task Force followed up on November 20 with substantive comments. He confirmed that the Canadian Embassy in Kabul had already conveyed a similar message to President Karzai. He expressed the hope to continue to work closely with the U.S. and other international partners in Kabul to deliver "clear, consistent, and coordinated messaging." Canada hopes that the UN will take a leadership role in delivering to the new Afghan administration the expectations of the international community, he commented, and that the new Afghan administration sets "clear, realistic goals for the next five years." Norfolk expressed satisfaction with the key themes of President Karzai's inauguration speech, but stressed the importance now of elaborating "realistic and concrete plans to achieve these goals" - with the support of the international community.

¶2. (SBU) According to Norfolk, Canada strongly agreed with the U.S. that the new Afghan government's first priority would have to be "immediate, visible, and meaningful action to combat corruption," as well as to "elaborate a strategy" to combat its underlying causes. He emphasized the importance that anti-corruption efforts be "Afghan-led" and have the "buy-in from the Afghan government." He observed that "Afghans deserve competent and accountable leaders at all levels of government." Canada also agreed with the U.S. that security is the "most immediate challenge facing Afghanistan," especially in the south where Canadian Forces are located. Canada wants to see the strengthening and enlargement of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police, while also calling on the Afghan government to focus additionally on reconciliation through a "unified, Afghan-led reintegration of mid-and low-level insurgents." He noted the continued importance of economic development for long-term stability, and highlighted Canadian investments to date, especially in education, eradication of polio, and the rehabilitation of the Dahla Dam - Canada's three "signature projects."

¶3. (SBU) Norfolk cited a few other priorities that Canada hopes the international community will convey to the new government in Afghanistan, most notably the importance of implementing Afghanistan's international human rights commitments, especially women's rights - which are "fundamental" to sustainable development. He expressed agreement with the UN and the UK on the importance also of Afghanistan building strong and constructive relationships with its neighboring countries.

¶4. (SBU) Norfolk called for the international community to be prepared to respond to the announcement of the new Afghan cabinet. He said that Canada would welcome U.S. views on whether there should be one, or two, conferences in Kabul or elsewhere in the near-term. He expressed interest in the U.S. call for benchmarks, and welcomed further consultations within the international community on which ones as well as their anticipated timeframes. He added that DFAIT had already instructed its team in Kabul to be in close contact with the U.S. and other allied embassies in Kabul, as well as the UN mission, to ensure further "cooperation and coordination."

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